

The Role of M-learning in Distance education

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Abstract

Mobile learning is in many ways a new phenomenon and its theoretical, pedagogical, organizational and technical structure is currently still developing any distance teaching as well as residential institutions have already started to experiment with mobile learning through pilot projects as part of their e-learning and information and communication technology (ICT) enhanced learning environments. This paper discusses the use and advantages of M-learning in distance education.

Keywords: ICT, Mobile Learning, Computer Based Technology

1. Introduction

It is a field of education that focuses on teaching methods and technology with the aim of delivering teaching, often on an individual basis, to students who are not physically present in a traditional educational setting such as a classroom. It has been described as "a process to create and provide access to learning when the source of information and the learners are separated by time and distance, or both." Distance education courses that require a physical on-site presence for any reason (including taking examinations) have been referred to as hybrid or blended courses of study. Type of education, typically college-level, where students work on their own at home or at the office and communicate with faculty and other students via e-mail, electronic forums, videoconferencing, chat rooms, bulletin boards, instant messaging and other forms of computer-based communication. Most distance learning programs include a computer-based training (CBT) system and communications tools to produce a virtual classroom. Because the Internet and World Wide Web are accessible from virtually all computer platforms, they serve as the foundation for many distance learning systems.

2. Mobile learning

Mobile learning is in many ways a new phenomenon and its theoretical, pedagogical, organizational and technical structure is currently still developing (Brown, 2004). Many distance teaching as well as residential institutions have already started to experiment with mobile learning through pilot projects as part of their e-learning and information and communication technology (ICT) enhanced learning environments. Because of the similarities between distance educations, online and mobile learning, the established field of distance education can provide valuable insight into strategies, approaches and practical experiences with regard to the conception and organization of this new medium for learning. M-learning' is the follow up of E-



learning and which originates from D-learning (distance learning). M-learning is the delivery of education to the students who are not having fixed location or who prefer to use mobile phone technology for learning. The rapid growth in the mobile and communication sector make it possible to develop new forms of education. M-learning means delivery of education by means of the mobile phone devices, PDAs and audio players. M-learners seek the lessons in the small format. Mobile learning is defined as the provision of education and training on mobile devices: Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs), smart phones and mobile phones. One of the characteristics of mobile learning is that it uses devices which citizens are used to carrying everywhere with them, which they regard as friendly and personal devices, which are cheap and easy to use, which they use constantly in all walks of life and in a variety of different settings, except education.

3. Need of Mobile Learning

According to Attewell (2005) as quoted by Yousuf (2007) and Becking et al (2008), there are several advantages inherent in mobile learning over Internet

- helps learners to improve literacy and numeric skills
- helps learners to recognize their existing abilities
- can be used for independent and collaborative learning experiences
- helps learners to identify where they need assistance and support
- helps to overcome the digital divide
- helps to make learning informal
- helps learners to be more focused for longer periods
- helps to raise self-esteem and self-confidence
- it is portable from one place to another
- more wide spread and popular than Internet
- not much technological pre-requisites
- cost is pretty affordable as comparatively less recurring cost and one-time investment
- provides real time and location independency

4. Mobile Internet

According to the many sources, one of the major factors of the usage of mobile internet is its speed. Mobile internet has faster connection. Due to this fact, many users tend to use mobile internet. The introduction of the 3G cards has a competitive high speed. All the current service providers are trying to increase their bandwidth to get more customers. The numbers of mobile phones that are capable of surfing the net have been increasing rapidly. One of the greatest problems when browsing the net on the cell phones is the small size of the screen. Because of this many developers are developing the websites that can easily be seen on the cell phones as well.

5. Mobile society

Ongoing debates about the cyberspace, e-computing and E-commerce have suggested that the online world somehow will be dramatically different from the life in the analog world. It is

true that E-commerce continues to grow and the specific locations of the persons and businesses do not matter that much anyone. This is also true that now we are seeing forums, blogs, discussion groups and social network to re-socialize and form new tribes on the internet. It seems that every day we are increasingly connected via technologies such as email, cellular phones, instant messaging and all of these technologies are increasingly interconnected with each other. When we communicate on our cell phones, we are also mobile in the sense that we can move freely while in the constant communication. Here Mobile Phones you will learn about the mobile technologies, cellular phones, and wireless communication introduction, overview to gsm, gprs, sms and mms reviews

6. Use of M-learning in India

With over 700 million phone users in India in the past one decade, close to 65 per cent of India is connected to this wonder machine. It is estimated that close to 70-80 per cent youth in the country may own a mobile phone making it most preferred communication option than any other media ever. The all pervasive nature of mobile phones makes it imperative for educationists to evaluate its merits and demerits as learning tools or aid.

In India, the mobile phone has revolutionized communication and India is now one of the fastest growing markets for mobile phone services, with growing usage and increasing penetration. The increasing ubiquity of the mobile phone begs for it to be used as a learning tool. It would be a shame if we were unable to leverage it to improve socio-economic conditions in our vast population.

Mobile phones are not just communications devices sparking new modalities of interaction between people; they are also particularly useful computers that fit in your pocket, are always with you, and are nearly always on. Like all communication and computing devices, mobile phones can be used to learn. The content delivered would depend on the capabilities (features) of the device accessing. There are many kinds of learning and many processes that people use to learn, but among the most frequent, time-tested, and effective of these are listening, observing, imitating, questioning, reflecting, trying, estimating, predicting, speculating, and practicing. All of these learning processes can be supported through mobile phones. In addition, cell phones complement the short-attention, casual, multitasking style of today's young learners.

7. Modes of M-Learning

M-Learning is characterized by the ability to learn through portable devices. Technology has continued to play a pivotal role in teaching and training, though mobile technologies and devices have their own share of advantages and also disadvantages. There are many different types of m-learning -

- Communication through SMS between two mobile phones, whereby one can send or receive text messages of 160 characters.

- Extended form of SMS – MMS (Multi-Media Messaging Service). In this technology, text messages and graphics both are included.
- WAP enabled mobile phones that can access the Internet through deploying protocol of international standard.
- Personal Digital Assistant (PDA) devices that function like mini PC compatible machines, like Palm OS or Pocket PC Mac OS.
- Bluetooth facilitates PDA message sharing from one mobile device to another.
- MP3 file format for compression and sharing
- PDA CAMs

8. Advantages of M-Learning

- One can access lessons, video clips and audio libraries from anywhere, including public places and moving buses and trains.
- Interaction with fellow students and instructors will be a great help. It is an accepted fact that learning is made easier when information is shared and questions answered through a sort of combined study. This helps several students to work together on assignments even while remaining at far-flung locations.
- Portability is a very big plus, as a PDA is compact and very lightweight, and enables a student to take notes or enter all types of data directly into the device.
- There is a psychological factor; owning handheld devices increases student motivation and deepens the commitment to using and learning with them. Further, the present generation of students has a fascination with handhelds like PDAs, mobile phones and similar carry-around devices. The learning material is mostly colorful and inviting which may prompt students to go back and forth and practice more.
- It is a fact that most handheld devices are more affordably priced than larger systems, and already a major percentage of the population owns them.
- Flexible hours of learning are indeed a great boon as students can access the system anytime 24-7 and from any location. What is more, teacher support can now be expected even outside classrooms and other learning environments.
- Each student can learn at his or her own pace - some student may be slower learners. The students who pick up things fast need not waste time going repeatedly through basic lessons.
- Yet another blessing is a huge saving in the cost of learning materials and also commuting expenses

9. Conclusions and Future Scope

There can be huge impact, if we get learning out of the realm of traditional educational models. A traditional education model comprises of a classroom with a teacher, a blackboard and students. But this model has limited use in a country like India where 200 million youth have no access to formal educational institutions. Traditional education also comprises subjects, theories, exams and rankings. But the 200 million out-of-college youth are not equipped to garner knowledge in this fashion. Most of them are at work, far away from their homes, earning livelihood to support their families. What they need is Just-In-Time knowledge and learning



solutions in the areas of job skills, government schemes, job search, health and hygiene, family planning, agricultural practices, career guidance, and so on.

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